Vol. IV. Numb. 14.

THE OBSERVATOR.

The Reviews *Charge against the* Obſervator. *Of keeping the Peace at Elections with Troops of Horſe. Of the Election at* Hartford. *Of* Honorary Freemen. *Remarks on that Head. Of the Pariſh Prieſts being made Freemen, and Voting in Towns Corporate.*

From **Wednesday** May the 16th, to **Saturday** May the 19th, 1705.

Country-m. MAſter, I am glad to ſee you well; every Body is upon your Back; here's Mr. *Review* falls foul on your Skirts, about your Notion of keeping up our *Wooden Walls* as a Security to the Kingdom, *&c.*

Obſ. All this ſhan't put me by my Subject of Parliaments; what I have ſaid on that Subject is agreeable to the true Intereſt of *England*; my Diſcourſes are *Plain Law* and *Matter of Fact*; and let Mr. *Review*, or any Body elſe Fight me at that Weapon, if I am worſted, I'll fairly knock Underboard. I am not for Surprizing and Frighting the People, as Mr. *Review* does at every turn, if I can Perſwade by *Law* and *Reaſon* I have my End.

Country-m. I proteſt Maſter, I could hardly Sleep after that Terrible Author had beſpoke the People not to be Afraid or Surprized at what he ſhould ſay in his next Paper; I thought he had diſcover'd ſome *Horrid Plot* or other againſt Her Majeſties Perſon and Government, or that he had rear'd up 20 Thouſand Able Sailors in 24 Hours to Man our Fleet, or ſome terrible thing or other; but when the Paper came out, what was it? *Peace and Union from End to End*; bleſs me, thought I, afraid of *Peace* and *Union*, I'll fear no more of Mr. *Reviews* Thunder-Bolts.

Obſ. The Author of that Paper, without any *Reaſon* or *Provocation*, has been often flinging Dirt at the *Obſervator*; perhaps he thinks that no Body ought to Write but himſelf; and that ſince he has alter'd the Title of his Paper (which at firſt was deſign'd to Correct the Errors of *News-Writers* and *Petty Stateſmen*, he himſelf being a *Great One*) and is become an *Obſervator* on Tranſactions at Home, he may think that I ought to leave off Writing, when ſo *Great a Man* has undertaken the Office of an *Obſervator*.

I muſt confeſs I may be at a Loſs when I engage ſuch a *Polite Hero* that pretends to all the *Accurateneſs* and *Fineneſs* of Stile; but the wiſeſt ſort of People will not on this Account reflect on me, who have ſpent ſo much Time in tumbling over the *Muſty Rolls* of *Antiquity*, and in Studying the *Obſolete Latin*, *French* and *Saxon*, by the Knowledge of which we underſtand the *Cuſtoms* and *Laws* of our Anceſtors: I ſay, Wiſe Men can't imagine that ſuch a Perſon whoſe Daily Converſation is with Authors 1000 Years old ſhould have ſuch *Quaint Expreſſions* and *Beau Language* as one that has *Writ* more Books than ever he has *Read*.

I ſhall have a fitter time to clear my ſelf from the *Aſperſions* of this Author, which I had no need to do, had he been ſo Juſt as to have Quoted the Paper from whence he took that Paſſage. I have not the Papers now by me, but as I remember, it's taken from a Paper wherein I am Diſcourſing of the Particular Intereſt of *England* in this War, ſeparate from that of the *Confederacy* in General, and I make the particular Intereſt of *England* to be the Deſtruction of the *French Fleet*, &c. But more of this when I come to Anſwer this Authors Cavil.

I ſhall ſay no more at preſent to him, than juſt to remove him out of the way to my intended Diſcourſe: In his Paper of *Thurſday May* the 10th, he ſays, *Her Majeſty, as She has never yet made uſe of Her* Military Authority *to deal with any of Her own Subjects, will, no doubt, be very unwilling to begin with the City of* Coventry; *but if nothing but Troops of Horſe will keep you quiet; you muſt thank your ſelves, the* Peace *muſt be maintain'd.*

I would deſire our *Great Stateſman* to ſhow what *Laws* do Authorize Her Majeſty to keep the *Peace* at Elections with Troops of Horſe? Whether he means *Regular Troops*, or thoſe of the *Militia?*

2. Whether the *Houſe of Commons*, upon the Return and hearing Evidence touching *Riots* and *Routs* at Elections, are not more Capable Judges in the Caſe than Troops of Horſe?

3. Whether the *Peace* of our Elections is more likely to be preſerved by the *Civil*, or by the *Military Power?*

4. Whether we had not better have the 134 *Tackers* again in the Houſe, than to have them *Dragoon'd* out of their Elections to the loſs of the *Conſtitution?*

5. Since our Anceſtors us'd to *remove* the *Red-Coats* from *Towns Corporate* and *Burroughs* ſending Members to Parliament, at the Time of the Election; whether Mr. *Review* does not pretend to more Judgment than our Fore-fathers in *bringing them in* at that Time?

6. Since he has written ſo much againſt the *Tackers*, and produc'd ſo many weighty Reaſons on that Head, whether he has not found out a pretty Project to accompliſh that End, by bringing in thoſe to keep the *Peace* at Elections, who (if we may Judge by the late Buſineſs at *Honiton*) would abuſe all thoſe that Vote againſt 'em?

I ſhall not ſpeak to the ſecond General Head as I intended, the Returns coming upon us ſo faſt it will be Time ſpent to no purpoſe. Therefore let me ſee what you have Collected out of the Letters ſent me by the laſt Poſt from the Counties concerning the Practices at Elections; that's a Point requires Examination as much as any.

Country-m. Here's a new ſort of Electors, call'd *Honorary Freemen*, a ſort of People ſprung up that I never heard of before, you have an Account of them in two Letters ſent you from *Hartford*; it ſeems the *Tackers* could not carry it there by *Legal Votes*, and ſo the *Magiſtracy* of the Town made 100, one Letter ſays 150 *Honorary Freemen*, all of the *Tackers* ſide; among theſe were 13 Clergymen,

Clergymen, the reſt Gentlemen and their Servants, to ſerve a turn. When one of the Pariſh Prieſts came to Poll, an Honeſt Fellow ſtanding by, ask'd him, *If he would take a Prentice, and how much Money he expected with one?* Now, Maſter, does our Church admit of Prieſts to be *Mechanicks* and *Tradeſmen?*

They had another Trick too to make the *Tackers Intereſt*, one of the Voters againſt them was committed to Priſon, under pretence of ſomething done by him a great while ago, and refuſed to be Bail'd by the Juſtices; and another of them was Arreſted in open Court: Now, Maſter, if we have ſo many *Calves-Head Juſtices* in *England* (I thought that in *Southwark* had been the only one) 'twill be impoſſible to have due Elections & Returns.

Obſ. This practice of *Honorary Freemen*, or *Burgeſſes*, is altogether contrary to our *Conſtitution*, and if there be any ſuch Power given to the *Mayor* and *Aldermen* of *Hartford* in their Charter, I ſay that Charter is alſo contrary to our *Conſtitution*, and ought to be taken away.

Every Freeman of a Corporation has as much a Right to the *Liberties*, *Franchiſes* and *Immunities* of that Corporation, as has the *Mayor*, *Aldermen* or *Burgeſſes*; and the Governing part of the Town is to be made out of the Freemen by Servitude, otherwiſe our Charters are very *Unjuſt* and *Tyrannical*, that Men who have ſerved their Time, are made Free by Indenture, and do pay Scot and Lot to the Pariſh, ſhall be Govern'd by *Outlyers*, that are Qualify'd neither of theſe ways.

There is an Antient Corporation, called *New Town* in the *Iſle of Wight*, which ſends two Members to Parliament, I think there are not above two or three Houſes in the whole Town, and it being thought unreaſonable that two Members ſhould Repreſent but two Men, and at the ſame time it being Judged unfit that a Corporation ſhould be extinct for want of Members, all Gentlemen of the Iſland, of ſuch an Eſtate, have a Right to Vote; this, as I remember, is the preſent *Conſtitution* of that Town: But certainly no *Extraneous Honorary Freemen* ought to be made, while there are enough Freemen by Servitude living in the Town for that purpoſe.

When a Perſon not inhabiting, not having ſerv'd his Time as an Apprentice in a Town, is made a Freeman, he is juſtly term'd *Honorary*; he has but the bare Title of a Freeman, not the Priviledge as a Freeman Inhabitant; a Title does not ſuppoſe Power in all Caſes. The Queen is the Fountain of Honour, and may Dub as many Knights as She pleaſes, but what are they more than other Men? Their Knighthood will not buy a Leg of Mutton in the Market; the Mayor of *Hartford* may Dub as many Freemen as he pleaſes, but I am ſure, according to our *Conſtitution*, unleſs they live in the Town, and bear *Pariſh Offices*, and contribute to the Charge, or have been made Free by Servitude, they ought not to have any ſhare of the Government.

This practice of making *Honorary Burgeſſes* is Ridiculous as well as Unjuſt. It is a Sign that a Corporation is arrived to the Years of Dotage, that the Great Boys, the *Milk-Sops*, the *Souce-Crowns* of the Town are not to be truſted with their own Priviledges, when they call a Foreign Aſſiſtance to the Government.

It is the Law and Cuſtom of *England*, that all *Lunaticks* and *Ideots* poſſeſſed of Eſtates, ſhall be under the Care and Government of the *Lord Keeper* or *Chancellor*; is it not as Reaſonable that ſuch an Officer ſhould be appointed to take care of all *Fooliſh* and *Mad Corporations?* And that an Hoſpital, like that of *Bedlam*, ſhould be built for all *Mayors* and *Burgeſſes* that are decay'd in their Underſtandings?

It has been the Opinion of Wiſer Men than my ſelf, that all theſe *Fooliſh Mercenary Burroughs* ſhould be *Diſfranchiſed*, and I have known a Bill brought in upon that Account for *Stockbridge* in *Hampſhire*, and our *Conſtitution* admits of it. For tho' our *Conſtitution* be Parliaments, yet 513 Members is not the *Conſtitution* of Parliaments; the *Legiſlative Power* may leſſen the Number if it pleaſes; nor is there any need of doing ſo, the *Mercenary Factious Burroughs* being extinct, their Members may be added to the Counties, whoſe Repreſentative Proportion is not anſwerable to that of the Burroughs, as the Land has now Topp'd upon Trade, and ſo we ſhall ſtill have our Number of Members.

Such as know any thing of the Freedom and Rectitude of Elections, muſt own that the Voting of *Honorary Freemen* is foul Practice, and why this has not been Rectify'd by Parliaments, is a meer Riddle. But if the Major part of the Houſe come in by ſuch, or worſe Practices, it cannot be expected; in the mean time, at this rate, how are you duly Repreſented? When Voters are unduly made, are not Parliaments alſo?

I am forc'd to cut ſhort many things on which I ought to enlarge, for when I began the Subject of Elections, I was in good hopes ſome able Pen or other would have eas'd me in many Points neceſſary to the clearing of the Peoples Rights in Voting. I have often told you, you can never know what your own Rights are, unleſs you know what you Anceſtors Rights were; they were certainly the ſame as belong to us now; our *Conſtitution* is the ſame as ever, as Young as ever, not one wrinkle on its Brow, with the ſame *Beautiful Countenance*, only ſhaded by ſome Dirt flung on it, which we want a good *Houſe of Commons* to waſh off.

To ſet the People right in their Priviledges, and Antient *Modus* of Election, they ſhould be acquainted how it was ſettled at firſt; but this requires ſo many Footſteps back into the long Road of Antiquity, that my Subject will not bear an Account thereof, by Reaſon of the Neceſſity of its Contraction. However, in ſhort, I may tell you, that the *Modus* of the Peoples Electing was of themſelves; that they did agree on the manner of their Choice, that if the Parliament ſhall be ſuffer'd to preſcribe the *Modus* of Election, by the ſame Power of *Legiſlation* they may preſcribe the Perſons to be Elected.

I know there is a poſſitive Law, that all Elections, in Reſpect of the *Modus*, ſhall be as adjudged by the laſt Parliament, which ſhows that we have had more than one Parliament that has Uſurp'd on the Freedoms of the Electors; 'tis the certainty of Laws and Franchiſes that makes 'em valuable: But by this Act the *Modus* of your Elections is altogether uncertain, depending on the Arbitrary Pleaſure of the Perſons that Repreſent you. I'll give you an Inſtance in the laſt Parliament. The Electors of the *Burrough* of *Southwark*, according to their Antient *Modus* of Election, did Elect Mr. *Cox* and Mr. *Cholmley*, one *John Lade*, a Druggiſt in the *Burrough*, ſet up againſt them, and loſt it by ſome Hundreds of Votes, *Lade* Petitions the Houſe concerning an Undue Election, in whoſe Favour the Election was made void, the old *Modus* of Election vacated, a new *Modus* preſcrib'd; *Lade* loſt it again by the new *Modus*, he ſtood again this Election, loſt it a ſecond time by the new *Modus*. Now, ſuppoſe *Lade* ſhould Petition again in the next Parliament, may they not make a third *Modus* of Election, and ſo on in *Infinitum?*

But the Abuſe of *Honorary Freemen* is ſo plain, that it needs no farther Diſquiſition; and I am ſatisfy'd, let the Parliament be what it will, that the Magiſtrates of *Hartford*, and another great Town in *Suffolk* will be ſeverely Puniſh'd, I think loſs of *Franchiſe* is the leaſt Puniſhment can be Inflicted on the Perſons concerned, for 'tis hard that Honeſt Men ſhould loſe their Priviledge becauſe others have miſus'd it.

Country-m. Your Servant Mr. *Mayor* of *Hartford*. But now I think on't he'll come off, he may Plead *Ignorance* and *Folly*, and ſay that he thought all the People in the *Town* were *Fools*, becauſe he was ſo himſelf, and did not know how to make a Good *Choice*, and therefore got others to direct them; beſides he had 13 Infallible *Dark Lanthorn Guides* of the *Church* to Inſtruct him, and ſo may lay the Fault on his *Fathers Confeſſors*, the Pariſh Prieſts. Come, Maſter, here's a Good Health to all the *Corporations* in *England* that have Senſe enough to chuſe for themſelves, and ſo let's march to *Bed*.

Adverti ſements.

LOſt, or Stolen lately from Coopers-Hall, in Baſing-Hall-Street, London, a Brace of Fallow-Colour'd Grey hound Dogs. The one between a ſhort Ruff and a Smooth, with a black Grizzled Mouth, both Ears black, a mark of a Bullet in his near hind Loin, and a white tip on his Tail. The other a Fallow ſmooth Dog, a black Muzzle, with a white ſnip down his Noſe, a Star in his Forehead, a little white ſpeck on the Nape of his Neck, and one third of the lower part of his Stern all white. Whoever has taken up, or can give Notice of them at the ſaid Hall, or the Carlile Coffee-Houſe near Guild-Hall, ſo as they be had again, ſhall have for a Reward, the Sum of Ten Shillings, or Proportionable for one of the ſaid Dogs.

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